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6/9/2016

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/powerhouse-museum-site-in-ultimo-to-be-sold-to-developers-20150226-13pn5o.html>

• FEBRUARY 26 2015

Powerhouse Museum site in Ultimo to be sold to developers

• Rose Powell

○ The state government will sell the Powerhouse Museum in Pyrmont to raise about \$200 million for the museum's relocation to Sydney's western suburbs.

Premier Mike Baird and Arts Minister Troy Grant announced the relocation of the museum to Parramatta and flagged their plans to sell the building and its prime central Sydney land on Thursday. (Feb 25)



For sale: the Powerhouse Museum will be relocated in western Sydney. Photo:

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"Every dollar from the sale of the site will come towards this new museum. It's a very strategic site right next to the city, with a good opportunity for renewal," Mr Baird said.

Mr Baird said they expected the Pyrmont site to reap between \$150 and \$200 million and that it would be developed into apartments.

John Zheng, the director of LJ Hooker Pyrmont, said the value of the land would vary considerably depending on the restrictions the state government and local council placed on the development, particularly maximum building heights.

"It is a very unique opportunity, and also a significant site which brings extra value," Mr Zheng told Fairfax Media. "But the highest and best value for it will be apartment blocks."

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Mr Zheng said any apartment redevelopment able to return on an initial land investment of \$200 million would need to be significant, so community concerns would also be considered by developers.

The announcement of the museum's relocation comes shortly after the [release of a report](#) about how governments can better support the arts and culture in western Sydney, home to nearly a third of the state's population. The government has also set aside \$30 million to begin the Powerhouse Museum relocation, and to expand local dance group Form Studio and the Riverside Theatre.

Before the announcement, only 7 per cent of the NSW Arts Budget went to western Sydney initiatives. The additional millions doubles this to 14 per cent.

"For too long in the arts and culture space, we've accepted second best and we haven't been investing in terms of enough programs, promoting it enough and building the facilities that are required," Mr Baird said.

No site has been set aside for the new museum. A site will be selected following further research and business case development. Mr Baird mentioned locations near Parramatta Stadium or the former Parramatta jail.

In October, Powerhouse Museum director Rose Hiscock [told Fairfax Media](#) it was "vital" to their plans up to 2020 that the museum remained close to Sydney's CBD. "We would be really open to considering something [in western Sydney], but it would need to be a satellite from this site," she said in 2014.

However, on Thursday, Ms Hiscock said she and her team were looking forward to building a world-class museum from the ground up.

"What I said at that stage was you just don't pick up a museum and plonk it somewhere else. I've always been open to a venue in Parramatta and I'm really pleased to be able to do it."

The move may be good for the Powerhouse Museum, which has been battling flagging visitor numbers for years.

The most recent annual report reveals 2014's visitor total was 16 per cent beneath the 10-year average. This was up slightly from 2013, when the annual visitor total was 17.6 per cent beneath the average.

Last year, slightly more than 381,500 visitors streamed through the doors. Almost a quarter of these were for one exhibition, the video gaming exhibition *Game Masters*.

Western Sydney director of the Sydney Business Chamber David Borger told Fairfax Media the cultural institutions would boost the local community in many ways.

"It's terrific news for Parramatta. One thing every urban planner knows is cultural facilities need to be in great locations, and we'll make it work," Mr Borger said.

Mr Borger said the relocation would have a positive effect on the region's culture, retail and hospitality economies and identity.

"The west does not have any truly iconic public buildings, and it will be exciting to build one to help shape how western Sydney understands and promotes itself."

Mr Baird said the plan was for the new Powerhouse Museum to open before the end of the state government's next term, and the museum was likely to be closed at times during relocation.